

March 2, 2002

To whom it may concern:

**I strongly oppose SB184 and HB5262. Our absentee voting procedures do not need to be changed.**

As an assistant registrar and moderator of elections, I have seen the problems with mailing absentee ballot applications to every voter on the rolls. Due to archaic procedures that CT uses to remove people from the voter rolls, there are many applications that are sent to people who no longer reside in CT. The voter rolls are not cleaned up to the extent they should be. There were piles of non-deliverable absentee ballot applications that were returned to the Registrar's office. We will never know how many more were delivered to the wrong people and resulted in fraudulent votes. And many were not returned, and we don't know whether they were lost or stolen. Also, oftentimes, the signatures are not checked to verify identity.

My neighbor received multiple absentee ballot applications addressed to the prior owners, who had moved to Europe years ago. There is no need to invite fraud by tempting people to vote more than once when they receive applications or ballots by mistake.

We are no longer in a pandemic. People are not afraid to go to the polls. We have now seen the Super Bowl, concerts, college stadiums filled with thousands of people, and many gatherings with people much closer than they are at the polls. By law, the voting booths have to be three feet apart. I have worked many elections, and the atmosphere is conducive to social distancing. No one complained that they were afraid of getting sick at any of the elections I have worked during Covid. I actually had a few elderly folks who showed up and had forgotten their masks, and they were not worried about getting sick. If people feel vulnerable, they can request curbside voting in their car. They do not even need to get out of the car—it's convenient and safe.

I have seen many instances where the absentee ballot is rejected because of a missing signature, a missing envelope, or an overvote. Those voters will never know that their ballots were rejected. However, had they been physically present at the polls, they would have had the opportunity to correct their ballot, as the machine would reject the overvote, and the moderator would provide a new ballot. In this regard, absentee ballots could be seen as contributing to voter suppression.

You should also consider the financial and staffing ramifications for absentee voting. Towns need to hire additional people to mail, record, track, open, and count absentee ballots. It is costly for the town, and it is difficult to find competent part time workers to do these jobs. Essentially, these bills would create another unfunded mandate for the municipality.

Please vote NO on these bills.

Thank you.

Kathleen Randall, Avon